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AUTHOR Wallace, James M.
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ABSTRACT

During the past 10 years, a partnership between researchers and practitioners in educational research has developed in Oregon. In 1965 the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission was established. Since then, the commission has carried out research and influenced the development of various aspects of teacher education, certification, and related matters. In 1966 the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory undertook the Comfield Project, which developed a model program for improving knowledge, skills, and competencies in prospective elementary teachers. The program's definition of competency was "the demonstrated ability to bring about the expected outcomes of a role or function included in a job definition." This definition has had an impact on major documents which have resulted from current reform movements in Oregon teacher education and certification. The education profession and the commission are aware of difficulties in implementing competency-based education programs. Many demands for research will be made by the profession in years to come. Generally, they will deal with (a) licensing regulations for teachers as expressed through certification rules, (b) accreditation standards applied to teacher education programs designed to meet those rules, and (c) the nature of public schools in which teachers practice after they have completed basic certification programs. (PB)

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TEACHER NEEDS AND RESEARCHER RESPONSES - THE OREGON EXPERIENCE

James M. Wallace, Coordinator of Teacher Education,
Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission

There is a constantly shifting reciprocal relationship between the work of educational researchers and the activities of practitioners in schools and colleges. Studies are often completed by researchers, and the products of their work are then utilized in the field; in other situations, the need for studies is expressed by practitioners in a variety of ways, and researchers then respond. Most often, perhaps, research and practice proceed concurrently, with constant interaction between the two efforts and resultant modifications and adjustments in both.

In Oregon, during the past decade, there has been a true partnership in educational research. Studies have been initiated both by researchers and practitioners, with continuous dialogue between the two groups as studies have been proposed and conducted and their findings disseminated. The sequence of events, however, can best be described by indicating some of the major developments in schools and colleges and how these developments have shaped the form and emphasis of educational research.

A convenient starting date for this description is 1965, when the Oregon Legislature established a group known as the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. This Commission, comparable to those now being created in order states, was made up of teachers, administrators, and teacher educators, and

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had as its mission advising the State Board of Education on certification, teacher education, and related matters. The Commission began its work in 1966, and until 1973 functioned in this advisory capacity. The Commission soon learned that if it was to make sound recommendations to the State Board, it would have to sponsor certain research efforts to gather information which was not yet available.

During its early years, the Commission conducted four studies needed for specific purposes. It contracted with the University of Oregon for a study, completed in 1967, on the loss of experienced teachers through retirement.[1] This study now reads like ancient history, since it had its origin in the need to "attack the teacher shortage by meaningful social legislation." Another 1967 study, also conducted by the University, dealt with the misassignment of teachers in the state.[2] The intent of this research was to determine if sufficient numbers of teachers were working outside of their areas of preparation to justify changes in certification rules or in regulations governing school staffing.

In 1969, the Commission conducted a survey in which one-fourth of all certificated Oregon teachers participated.[3] This survey gathered opinions on certification, teacher education, tenure, school finances, and related matters. The results of the study were useful to the Commission as it developed recommendations for the Board of Education and as it participated in a major revision of the certification rules. Another study, completed in 1971 under a contract with Teacher Research, developed case studies of exemplary teacher education programs in the state.[4]

The previous four efforts were relatively limited and unsophisticated studies largely directed to answering specific questions encountered by the Commission in its work. But, they did indicate a recognition on the part of practitioners that policy decisions regarding teacher education and licensing should not take place in a vacuum, nor be decided on purely political grounds, but could profit from information and insights available only through research.

During the next two years, the Commission concentrated its efforts on the development of new certification rules, of a planning statement on educational personnel development, and on two new sets of standards for teacher education programs. The RULES FOR CERTIFICATION, adopted by the Board of Education to take effect in 1972, provided that certification could be achieved either through course completion or through the demonstration of competency. It included a statement encouraging institutions to waive requirements on the basis of competency and providing them with guidelines by which to grant such waivers.

Much of the Commission's effort came to fruition at a remarkable meeting of the Board of Education on June 29, 1973, at which the Board adopted three documents proposed to it by the Commission: A planning statement on educational personnel development, STANDARDS FOR THE APPROVAL OF OREGON COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS, and PROCESS STANDARDS FOR EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.[6] The PLANNING STATEMENT included activities and proposed accomplishments intended to promote the development of consortium-centered, competency-based teacher education programs. The

STANDARDS FOR APPROVAL updated accreditation standards which had been in use since 1955. And the PROCESS STANDARDS were intended to promote and guide the development of competency-based programs. Like the RULES FOR CERTIFICATION, the PROCESS STANDARDS did not mandate movement to a competency base, but encouraged teacher education institutions to develop competency programs as an experimental alternative to existing programs. They did, however, require that any new programs had to be consortium-centered and competency-based.

A certain amount of informal research went into the development of the Certification Rules and of the three documents adopted by the Board in 1973. The 1969 opinionnare indicated areas of dissatisfaction which influenced the new Rules for Certification; the three 1973 documents all profited from surveys of comparable literature from other states. But in order to see the interaction of more rigorous research with practice, we must go back to 1966 and examine a parallel line of development.

In 1966, the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, with substantial federal funding, undertook what came to be known as the Comfield Project.[7] The word Comfield was derived from competency-based, and field-centered. This project included institutions from several Northwest states, and had considerable impact throughout the region. But, its most continuous effect, and the one most germane to this topic, took place within the Oregon College of Education and Teaching Research, both parts of the State System of Higher Education, and both based in Monmouth, Oregon. These two institutions, working together, developed a model program which focused upon the development in candidates of the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed by

elementary teachers. Most important, perhaps, the persons working on the program took as their definition of competency "the demonstrated ability to bring about the expected outcomes of a role or function included in a job definition." For teachers, this meant nothing less than the demonstrated ability to help students learn. The Oregon College of Education's success in moving toward this goal resulted in its winning the 1974 Distinguished Achievement Award from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

This bold definition of competency has had its impact on the major documents which have come out of the current reform movements in Oregon teacher education and certification. The foreword to the current RULES FOR CERTIFICATION states that competency includes, among other things, "the ability to bring about desired development in the student through appropriate educative processes."[8] The PROCESS STANDARDS require that programs include at least some formal demonstration of the new teacher's ability to bring about desired pupil learning.

What is significant here, perhaps, is that the education profession, expressing itself through the Commission, has committeed itself to such a difficult and fundamental definition of the teacher's role. This takes on added significance when one examines the new context of teacher education in Oregon. The 1973 legislature, with encouragement from the Board of Education, the Commission itself, and the organized teaching profession, transferred total authority for teacher education and certification to the Commission.

This is the most comprehensive model of teacher governance of preparation and licensing in the nation. Public school educators have a clear majority on the Commission; the Board of Education cannot veto its rules or actions. Paralleling the above moves toward competency-based teacher education and certification as alternatives to traditional models, have been decisive statewide steps toward competency-based education for children and youth. The State Board of Education has adopted new graduation requirements and minimum standards for public schools which emphasize the outcomes of education.[9] The diplomas students "receive upon graduation will verify that they have learned and demonstrated the minimum competencies considered necessary for modern-day survival." Obviously, much research will need to be done to test the validity of the stated competencies, the performance indicators used to assess them, and the programs developed to help students achieve them. A major research effort will also need to be undertaken to determine what elements of teacher education programs effectively prepare teachers to bring about the desired outcomes with pupils.

The profession and the Commission are not naive about the difficulties of this. An effort has been made to follow the CBE and CBTE movements closely, and practitioners are aware of the immense research problems involved. But, the Commission has taken the position that by not concentrating on outcomes, we would avoid the ultimate educational issues; that another generation of research focused only on teacher knowledge and skills would still leave us in the dark about the actual results of all this educational effort. So the Commission is asking researchers to concentrate their energies on questions dealing with the abilities of teachers to bring about desirable student learning.

Given the new governance structure, and the rigorous definition of competency used in the state, what kinds of research are being done and are being requested by the profession? One current effort, proposed by Teaching Research, and financially supported in part by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, is a "Baseline Study on Competency-Based Teacher Education." On the assumption that rapid development would take place in this field over the next few years, they agreed that a status study of current practice would be helpful. This study, which will shortly be submitted to the Commission, will set a baseline from which to measure future developments.

With the Baseline Study as a modest beginning, what kinds of studies will be called for in the next few years? These broadly stated research suggestions are presented, not in priority order, nor necessarily in the sequence in which they are likely to occur, but in a roughly logical order; they start with the licensing regulations for teachers as expressed through certification rules, move on to the accreditation standards applied to teacher education programs designed to meet those rules, and then on to the arena of the public schools in which teachers practice after they have completed basic certification programs.

Assuming that we can get some usable information about CBE and CBTE programs and their results, what changes in the Rules for Certification are in order? Can we, and should we, move from the present pattern in which competency demonstration is an <u>alternative</u> to course completion to one in which certification can be achieved <u>only</u> through competency demonstration?

Assuming that, over a period of time, more relevant certification rules develop, what will be the impact on teacher education accreditation processes? Like certification, accreditation is still in a primitive stage. If it is difficult to establish a link between a teacher's certification status and his or her ability to bring about student learning, it is nearly impossible to move up to the next level and demonstrate a connection between a program's accreditiation status and the ability of teachers produced by that program to bring about such changes in students.

We have two sets of accreditation standards. Some courageous researchers could spend much time assessing the effectiveness of various standards. For example, accreditation is now placing more emphasis on follow-up studies of program graduates. We have an immediate need to know what kinds of follow-up studies yield data that is useful to institutions as they work to modify programs.

Oregon, like a number of other states, is involved in a statewide assessment program which is beginning to produce solid information about learning levels achieved by pupils in various fields. We need to know what such research results have to say to practitioners and to teacher educators about modifications in public school programs, in certification rules, and in teacher education programs.

Our teaching population continues to stabilize. Fewer new teachers are hired, and experienced teachers remain in their positions for longer

periods of time. This creates new research and development problems. Heretofore, most CBTE effort has taken place at the pre-service level. We now need all the help we can get from the research community regarding the acquisition and assessment of new competencies on the part of experienced teachers. The fact that more and more teachers are being covered by tenure and fair dismissal laws places a greater burden on the processes by which teachers are evaluated. What kinds of evaluation can we trust, and what kinds of teacher assessment can we link to pupil learning and growth?

In most states, the competency-based teacher education movement is accompanied by increased dependence on public school practitioners, both for program governance and for program implementation. Studies must be undertaken which will document the process of consortium development and which will lay the groundwork for comparative studies of consortium and non-consortium programs.

One could list further such demands for research which the profession will make. But, these should be sufficient to demonstrate that educators in the field are no longer willing to wait passively while researchers work on projects largely of their own choosing. As practitioners gain increased influence over curriculum, working conditions, licensing, and preparation programs, they will become more sophisticated about their own needs for research. And, we may expect that some of the militance which now goes into contract negotiations may enter into the continuing dialogue between practitioners and the research community. Our recent experience in Oregon gives some reason for optimism that this dialogue will be productive, and that it will result in research which is truly in the public interest.

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